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U.S. News Officials Disagree on Curbs For Spy Agencies

WASHINGTON, May 6 (AP)—American news organizations are suspected in many countries of being involved in United States intelligence gathering. But testimony before the Senate Intelligence Committee indicates that American journalists and news executives do not agree on a need for a law to curb the Central Intelligence Agency and other agencies in maintaining contacts with the media. Keith Fuller, president and general

manager of The Associated Press, said Thursday that he was "more cynical" than some others about the value of such legislation.

Regulations of the C.I.A. prohibit paid relationships between the agency and the news media. The Senate committee is considering whether to incorporate that rule in a new charter being drafted for the intelligence community.

"I am not concerned so much about the window dressing as the substance," Mr. Fuller said. "A very real problem, not an abstract one, is concern for the safety of 500 people who work in areas where any suggestion of collusion with the U.S. Government could be and has been quite dangerous."

"But legislation is not going to stop that problem," he continued, adding, "I'd

rather have the C.I.A. Director tell me privately that he is not going to use news reporters for intelligence purposes. That would mean as much to me, may be more, than your law."

The Reporter's Credibility

Richard Leonard, vice president and editor of The Milwaukee Journal and United States chairman for the World Press Institute, urged enactment of legislation to limit intelligence agency relationships with the news media.

He said that "any relationship" between the agency and a reporter would damage or destroy the reporter's credibility if it were discovered. "Further," he said, "the knowledge that the C.I.A. has a relationship with any journalist, American or foreign, casts suspicion upon all journalists."

Mike Wallace, the CBS News correspondent, said that the proposed legislation posed no apparent threat to press freedom in the United States. He endorsed a law restricting C.I.A. relationships with the news media and said that it should be extended to cover foreign nationals who work for American news organizations abroad.

Philip Geyelin, editorial page editor of The Washington Post, said that it would be proper legally to bar intelligence agents from posing as journalists but not to prohibit all relationships between those agencies and the news media. In the latter case, he said, a reporter's "self-discipline" should serve as a guide.